

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMK #0067/01 0381313
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 071313Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9193
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT PRIORITY

UNCLAS MANAMA 000067

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ENRG](#) [KNNP](#) [BA](#)
SUBJECT: BAHRAIN OUTLINES INITIAL PREPARATIONS FOR NUCLEAR
POWER PROGRAM

REF: A. 09 MANAMA 647
[1](#)B. 09 MANAMA 702

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: On January 25, senior Bahraini officials met with a team led by the State Department's Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation (ISN), and outlined GOB preparations for a civil nuclear energy program. Although Bahrain is not ready to pursue building a nuclear power plant at this time, the GOB has hired outside consultants to study the issue, and is moving to put in place the legal and policy framework necessary to meet international standards for a peaceful nuclear energy program. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On January 25, an interagency USG team led by ISN/NESS Deputy Director Alex Burkart, along with the Ambassador, met separately with Deputy Prime Minister Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa and MFA U/S Abdullah Abdulatif Abdullah to discuss Bahrain's plans for a civil nuclear energy program. Abdullah told Burkart that Bahrain was cognizant of the long-term commitment associated with a nuclear program and had decided to move forward with its planning nonetheless. In 2008, he mentioned, Bahrain joined the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It brought into force its comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA in 2009. The GOB has hired Freshfields Bruckhaus Derringer of London as a legal consultant, and is in the process of tendering a bid for an energy consultant, to which 15 companies have responded, to provide background studies. Both Abdullah and Mohammed bin Mubarak acknowledged the possibility that there may not be a suitable site in Bahrain for a nuclear plant; therefore one of the first orders of business for the new consultant will be a siting study.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Despite the fact that nuclear power may not be a possibility in Bahrain, Abdullah said that the GOB was moving ahead to establish the framework to support such a program. Abdullah noted that Bahrain desperately needs new sources of power generation, and that Bahrain will be looking to cooperation with "friendly countries like the U.S." to help establish a civil nuclear energy program. He stated that Bahrain remained strictly opposed to the development of nuclear technology in the region for anything other than peaceful/civilian purposes (specifically noting that Iran should not be allowed to develop uranium enrichment capabilities for military purposes), and that the GOB would seek to exemplify the proper way to establish a civil nuclear program.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The U/S said that MFA was working to identify all relevant treaties and conventions and would work to join or accede to them all while the background studies were being done. The U/S noted that the Additional Protocol (AP) is a very important requirement, and that Bahrain's AP would

potentially be signed with IAEA in the coming months, although ratification within the government would take longer. Abdullah also stated that Bahrain is encouraging other GCC states to join all relevant nuclear treaties (including the AP), noting that the GCC states are jointly studying the possibility of a shared reactor to be sited in any one of the countries. While Bahrain would be open to this possibility, Abdullah underscored that civil nuclear energy is an option that Bahrain also needs to explore domestically.

15. (SBU) Burkart provided Abdullah a copy of the IAEA guidance documents "Considerations to Launch a Nuclear Power Program" and "Milestones in the Development of a National Infrastructure for Nuclear Power," suggesting that these would be a good place to start processing the information needed to make a knowledgeable decision to pursue nuclear power. Burkart also informed the U/S that in addition to treaties and conventions, the GOB should look at establishing an independent regulatory authority. Mohammed bin Mubarak told the USG team that the GOB had already identified the need for establishing a regulatory agency and was committed to taking a long-term approach to the issue by not only establishing such a body now, but also investing in the education necessary to train-up a cadre of Bahrainis to run the agency in the future.

16. (SBU) The USG team briefly outlined concrete bilateral infrastructure development programs with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the National Nuclear Security Administration of the Department of Energy (DOE/NNSA). It strongly encouraged the GOB to actively participate in the international conferences and trainings that are available

with the IAEA and through the Infrastructure Development Working Group (IDWG) and Reliable Nuclear Fuel Services Working Group (RNFSWG) of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). Burkart also invited Bahrain to participate in a workshop on "International Energy Planning and Nonproliferation," sponsored by DOE/NNSA and the State Department, to be held in Muscat from May 9-13. Abdullah noted that he would work with the Embassy on the nomination process. Abdullah was particularly interested in more information on the IDWG, and stated that the GOB would identify people to attend all the upcoming meetings and conferences. Mohammed bin Mubarak admitted that the level of technical expertise in Bahrain was very thin and that he was depending on the guidance and advice of the USG as Bahrain plans its roadmap for its next steps. The Ambassador suggested that the GOB and USG establish a schedule of regular, informal consultations to stay coordinated as Bahrain moved forward with its plans--the DPM heartily agreed.

17. (U) This message has been cleared by the delegation.
ERELI